

Profile of allergy-related articles in the primary academic publication for UK General Practitioners

H E Smith & J Walker

Division of Primary Care & Public Health
Brighton & Sussex Medical School, Brighton, UK



Background

- Concern is often expressed about primary health care professionals' lack of knowledge about allergies, particularly diagnostic testing and the management of atopic disorders
- Limited training opportunities in allergy have been documented in both undergraduate and postgraduate education
- The British Journal of General Practice is the leading UK-based Family Practice journal, it has a strong clinical focus
- The BJGP was established in 1953. It is a high quality journal and is the world's 2nd most highly cited journal of general practice and primary care

What has been the contribution of the British Journal of General Practice to allergy awareness and knowledge?



Methods

- Keyword search of bjgp.org
- Terms used were 'allergy', 'allergies', 'allergic', 'rhinitis', 'urticaria', 'eczema', 'angioedema'
- All titles and articles from 1953 to 2013 were searched
- Full copies of relevant publications were downloaded and variables extracted, including title, year of publication, type of article, clinical focus
- As a comparator a similar search was conducted for articles about asthma using the search term 'asthma'

Results

- 41 allergy-related articles were identified in the 60 years since the journal was launched
- In the same time period there were 147 articles about asthma
- In 31 of the 60 years reviewed there were no articles at all about any allergy-related topic
- The focus of the articles published were eczema (6), food allergy (6), rhinoconjunctivitis (5), anaphylaxis (4), urticaria (1)
- There were no articles on angioedema
- Some articles addressed multiple atopic disorders, eg 'Allergic diseases in the elderly' (1968), 'Allergic disorders amongst horticultural, agricultural and forestry workers' [letter] (1965)

Figure 1. Ratio of allergy publications to asthma publications (n=188)

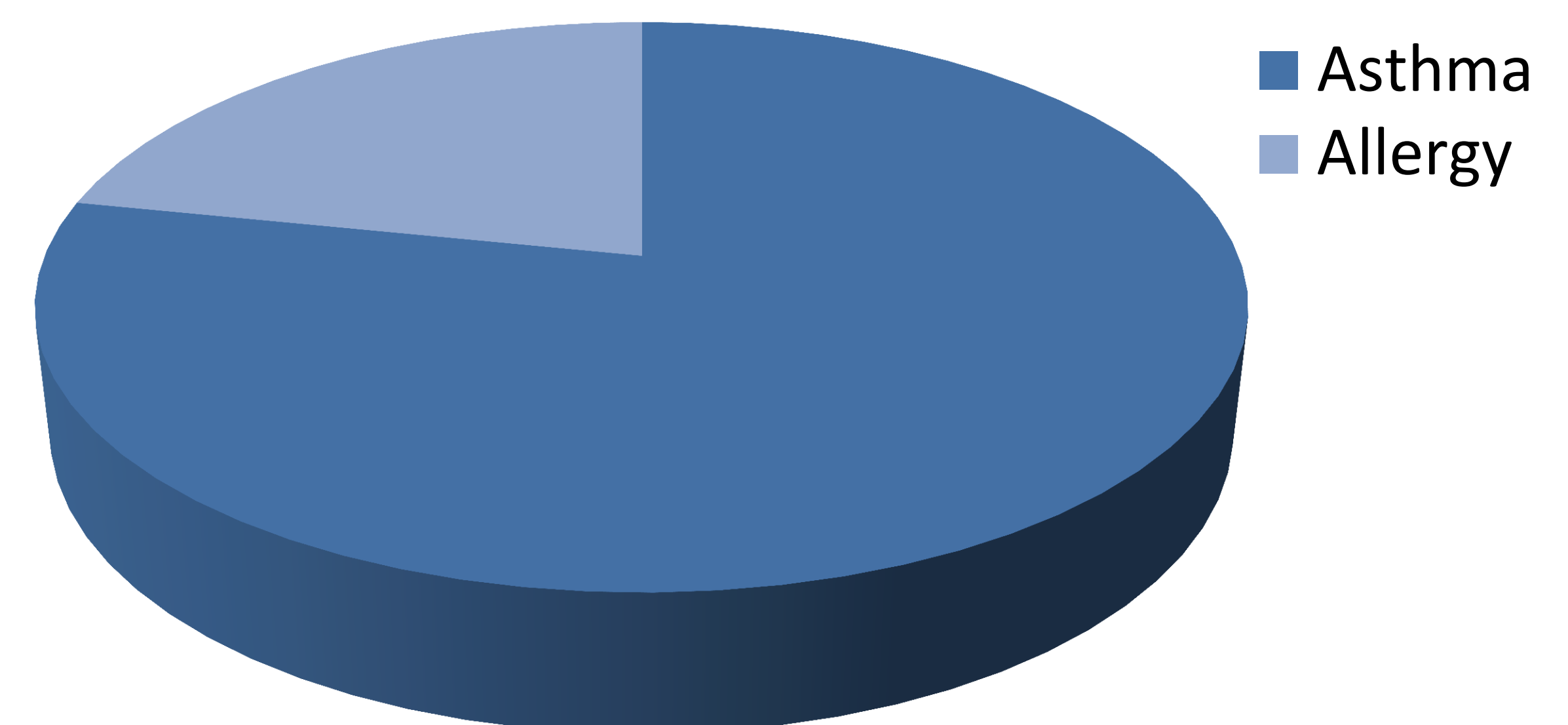
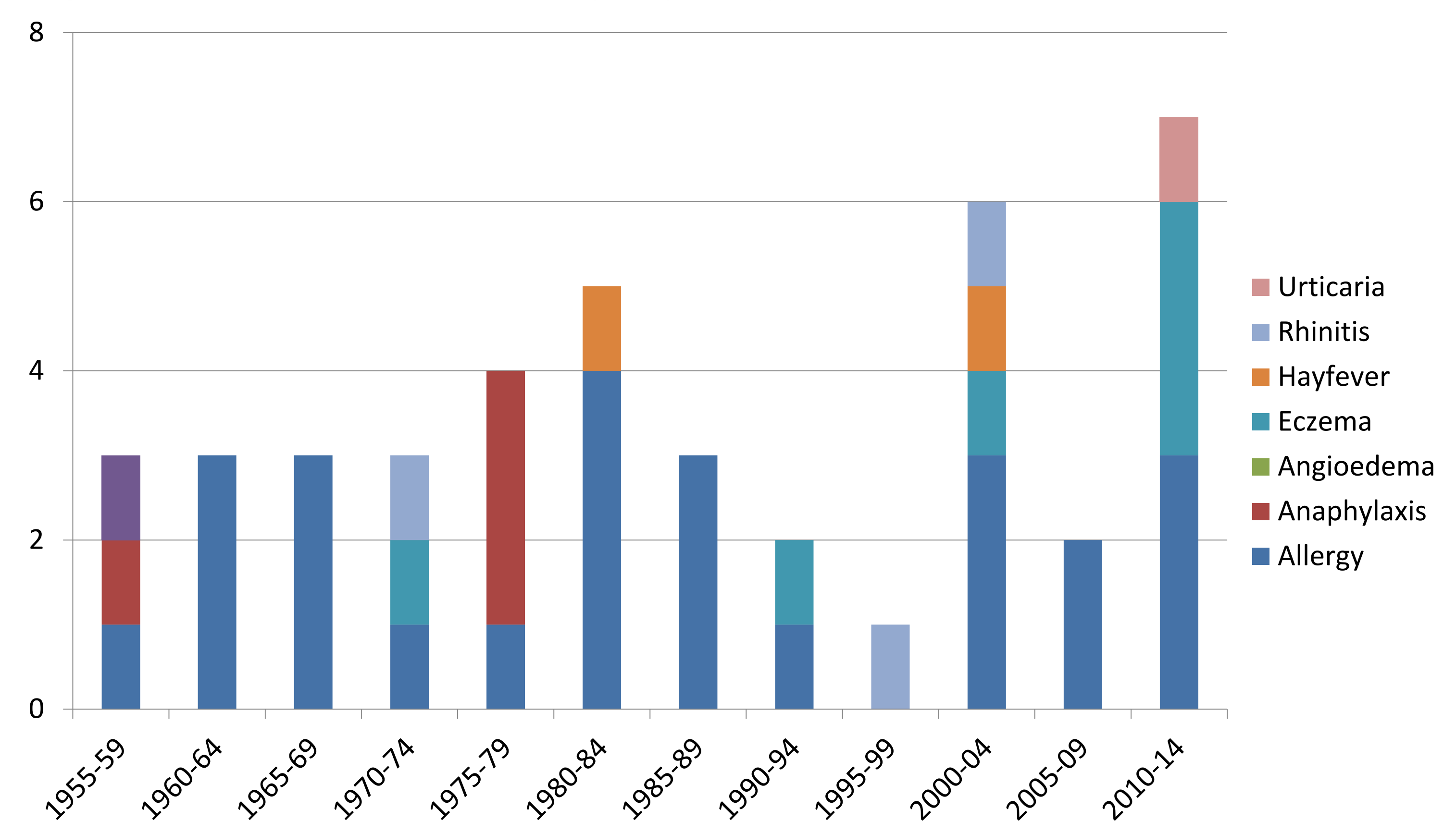


Figure 2. Articles in BJGP by 5 year period and disease (n=41)



Conclusions

- Allergy has a low profile in the British Journal of General Practice
- This low profile persists despite the increasing prevalence of atopic disorders and major national reports highlighting the need for better care of the allergic patient in primary care
- Our exploratory study highlights a missed opportunity to educate and inform General Practitioners about allergy through this widely circulated journal
- Further work is needed to understand better why so few articles on allergy are published in the BJGP
- If the paucity of publications reflects the number of articles submitted then BSACI members interested in informing and improving allergy management in General Practice should include the BJGP on their list of target journals

Where next?

- To share these observations with the Editor of the BJGP to understand whether they reflect editorial policy or lack of submissions from clinicians and researchers with expertise in allergy.
- To work with the BJGP to identify collaborative initiatives to address the serious mismatch between the prevalence of allergy in the clinical consultation and the number of allergy-related articles in the literature for GPs